INL's Advanced Test Reactor National Scientific User Facility annual "Users Week" enables university students and faculty from across the nation to learn about INL's unique nuclear research and collaboration capabilities.

INL fosters nuclear research partnerships with academia, industry

by Brett Stone, *Nuclear Science & Technology Communications intern*

IDAHO FALLS -- Although seven universities are already involved in research related to the Advanced Test Reactor, the facility is looking to encourage even more teamwork among academic researchers, industry experts and government.

From June 1 to June 5, the U.S. Department of Energy's Idaho National Laboratory hosted a National Scientific User Facility "User's Week." Students and faculty from universities across the nation, representatives from industry and other experts in nuclear power converged at INL's Advanced Test Reactor for the week.

Users Week attendees gather in front of Idaho Falls' University Place, where over 100 university faculty, students and industry representatives met for the event.

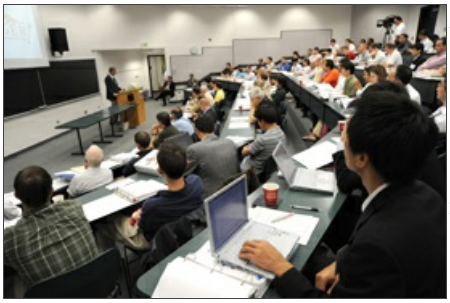
"I'm excited to have high caliber people come into town to share their knowledge and collaborate," said Jeff Benson, ATR NSUF Education Program coordinator. "The goal of ATR User's Week is to educate people on the capabilities for nuclear research that exist at INL and are offered to researchers through the ATR NSUF."

The event has three main goals beyond giving students, faculty and researchers the chance to network:

- Inform potential users of capabilities of both tools and facilities they can access through the ATR NSUF to advance nuclear science and technology,
- Provide a forum for researchers to discuss nuclear technology issues, and
- Educate and involve students in current issues involving nuclear science.

Classes, tours, presentations and hands-on experiments help meet these goals. The discussion topics included current materials and fuels research. Current university tests sponsored by the ATR NSUF study the effects of irradiation on materials used in reactors.

Results of these tests could help researchers predict the behavior of materials used in reactors and lead to even better reactor designs and longer plant lives. Americans receive roughly 20 percent of their electricity from nuclear power, a carbon-free source. The financial benefits of nuclear reactor advances would be significant since they would allow current plants to operate longer without needing to be replaced by new constructions.



Users Week attendees received instruction and explanation from industry experts and field veterans about developing nuclear programs.

As an investment in the future of nuclear research, INL awarded 50 travel scholarships to university students and faculty from universities across the country to attend the course. The scholarships were awarded based on a competitive application submitted by students and faculty. The scholarships covered all the costs associated with attending User's Week.

One of the primary goals of the User Facility is to encourage teamwork among academic researchers, industry experts and government entities that lead to outstanding ideas for scientific experiments.

Benson said he hopes the User's Week will increase collaboration and teamwork among university nuclear science students and faculty, industry specialists and INL. Partnerships between academia, industry and the government will be key, he believes, to helping promote important advances in the nuclear field and ultimately, benefitting the public.

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